# DETENTION OF MUTASIM AGHA JAN BY UAE NOW CONFIRMED, BASIS UNKNOWN

On Tuesday, I noted that Mutasim Agha Jan had gone missing in Dubai while attempting to work toward negotiations between the Afghan Taliban and Afghanistan's High Peace Council. Multiple outlets now are reporting on the Peace Council having confirmed that Mutasim was indeed detained by authorities in the UAE. Here is Khaama Press on the confirmation:

> The Afghan High Council has confirmed that the former Taliban leader Agha Jan Mutasim has been held in United Arab Emirates (UAE).
>
> Agha Jan Mutasim has been missing in United Arab Emirates during the past several days. He was a senior Taliban leader and was supporting the Afghan peace process with the Taliban group.
>
> Afghan High Peace Council following a statement said the detention of Agha Jan Mutasim clarifies that certain elements in the region are disrupting the Afghan peace talks.
>
> The statement further added that those individuals, who are struggling to resume Afghan peace process, have been victimized.
>
> The High Peace Council insisted that Afghan peace talks should take place inside Afghanistan and negotiations have taken place with the UAE officials to end limitations and resolve the issue of Agha Jan Mutasim.

Note that the High Peace Council accuses "certain elements in the region" of "disrupting

the Afghan peace talks". We also get a similar accusation from Karzai's office. From today's Washington Post, there is this:

> "Known and secret enemies of peace in Afghanistan continue sabotaging our peace process," Aimal Faizi, Karzai's spokesman, said Thursday. He did not specify who he thought was responsible, but Afghan officials often accuse neighboring Pakistan of abetting insurgents and stymieing peace efforts.

In that regard, it is very interesting to see an opposition political figure in Pakistan speaking out today against Pakistan's military supporting the Afghan Taliban:

> Pakistan must break alleged links with any Afghan insurgents if it is to adhere to Article 40 of the Constitution, said an opposition lawmaker in the Senate on Friday.
>
> Opposition lawmakers were expressing their views during a debate in the Senate on a motion on foreign policy moved by Senator Raza Rabbani of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).
>
> Opposition senators called for ending 'duplicity' in foreign policy formulation and stressed on the need to retrieve the ground lost by civilians to the security establishment over the past decades.
>
> /snip/
>
> Senator Farhatullah Babar said that the basis of foreign policy formulation is laid out in Article 40 of the Constitution of Pakistan.
>
> Reading out Article 40, he said that if we have to adhere to them we must break alleged links with any Afghan insurgents and stop the ability of Afghan fighters to seek refuge in Pakistan.

> “A stable and democratic civilian government leading foreign policy formulation would be welcomed by all parties, as compared to the security establishment leading it without any accountability,” he said.

So at least one opposition party (and it is in fact the party that led the previous government) now has publicly stated that Pakistan should stop supporting the Afghan Taliban and giving them refuge. It seems quite remarkable that they would also state so plainly that this policy is led by the military with no input from the civilian government.

Further complicating matters relating to Mutasim, a number of parties are working hard to emphasize that he has been formally disavowed by the Taliban. Here is Bill Roggio at Long War Journal:

> While we can’t confirm or deny that Mutasim is under house arrest, we are certain that he isn’t leading negotiations for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which is the official name of the Afghan Taliban.
>
> As we’ve noted here several times at *LWJ*, the Taliban have denounced Mutasim two times in the past in statements published on Voice of Jihad. The last time was on Feb. 20, when the Taliban said:
>
> > The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan once again declares to all parties that Agha Jan Mutasim does not hold a position in the Islamic Emirate and neither can he represent it.Also in that statement, the Taliban said that Mutasim’s actions are “detrimental” to both the Taliban and “the goals of the sacred Jihad.”

> > [See *LWJ* report, Afghan Taliban denounces former senior official, denies involvement in peace talks.]
>
> The Taliban previously disowned Mutasim in another official statement that was released on Voice of Jihad in August 2012. In that statement, the Taliban said Mutasim "was dismissed from his post by the leader of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in the year 2010 for stepping over his bounds and for lacking transparency in his work."
>
> "He currently does not hold any posts with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and neither can he represent the Islamic Emirate in any of his statements and actions," the statement continued.

Significantly, very similar comments are attributed to "US officials" in the Washington Post article linked above. The officials go on to say that Mutasim was arrested for something other than his peace negotiations:

> But in recent interviews, U.S. officials raised doubts about Motasim's role as a prominent peace negotiator, saying his ties to the Taliban leadership had faded in recent years. The officials added that Motasim's arrest was unrelated to his role as a peace negotiator. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment on the sensitive matter.

But the article goes further, and provides hints that he was arrested for meeting with dangerous individuals:

> Afghan officials say that they have not been formally told why Motasim was arrested but that they have heard explanations from individual UAE

> officials.
>
> “He was meeting certain suspicious people, and the Emiratis were worried about him,” said one Afghan official who was not authorized to speak on the record.

So we have a very conflicting set of reports here. On the one hand, both the US and the Afghan Taliban claim that Mutasim does not represent the Taliban. And yet it is clear from many of these reports that he held meetings with many figures while in Dubai, with Taliban figures said to be among them. Seeming to support that is the claim he was arrested for meeting with “suspicious people”.

Further complicating Mutasim’s arrest is the recent falling out among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which seems to have been patched up this week:

> Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council brokered a consensus Thursday after a rift that saw Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain withdraw their ambassadors from Qatar.
>
> During a meeting in the Saudi capital Riyadh, GCC foreign ministers conducted a “comprehensive review of measures relating to foreign and security policies,” according to a statement from the Gulf group.
>
> “[Participants] agreed to adopt measures that ensure working at a group level and that policies of any individual state should not affect the interests, security or stability of any other member state and without affecting the sovereignty of any of its states,” the statement said.

The falling out was over perceived support for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist

movements by Qatar:

> Last month, in an unprecedented split between Gulf Arab allies, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar, saying Doha had not implemented a GCC deal reached in Riyadh in November to avoid interfering in each other's affairs.
>
> The three countries, led by Saudi Arabia, accused Doha of interfering in the internal affairs of countries in the Gulf region by backing Islamist movements in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere. Qatar denied it interferes anywhere but vowed to stick to its foreign policy.

Did the UAE feel they had to arrest Mutasim because he was meeting with Islamists who engage in cross-border violence (namely the Afghan Taliban who live in Pakistan) and would be seen as highly hypocritical if they allowed him to operate while they were protesting Qatar's actions? If so, it would be supremely ironic if the arrest came about from Mutasim meeting with those who have disavowed him.

It seems possible that the events that resulted in the recent ouster of Bandar bin Sultan were also involved in this fallout and patch-up of the GCC. I can't help wondering if it somehow played a role in Mutasim's arrest being collateral damage from the disagreement.